# A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Thursday, March 17. 1709.

AS I was coming down from the Parliament-House, I met a Gentleman all in Joy, and mightily pleas'd with the Opinion of the Committee of the *House* of Commons about the *African* Company; and so full of it he was, that I took him for one of the Separate Traders—But he soon let me know, he was a Friend to the *African* Company, and being inquisitive of the Reasons and Foundation of his Joy, he told me, because the Committee had resolv'd upon establishing that Trade just as the Company desir'd.

I, who like the rest of the People that did not see so far as this Gentleman, thought otherwise, at least thought it was otherwise intended; began to enquire into his Meaning, upon which he pull'd out a Paper Wherein was wrote, that the Committee had given their Opinion,

*First*, That the Trade to *Africa* was an advantagious Trade to *Britain*, and necessary to the Plantations.

*There I, and all honest Men, who have Eyes in their Heads, joyn with them.*

*Secondly*, That the said Trade ought to be free to all her Majesty's Subjects in a regulated Company, under such Provisions as shall preserve the Trade by maintaining such Forts and Castles, as are needful, *&c. or to what Purpose.*

Now, says he, this determines for the Company's Proposal; for it is impossible, the separate Traders can offer any thing that can provide for the preserving the Trade by maintaining Forts and Castles, *&c.*

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This indeed was an unlucky Fellow, and I did not see so far as he——But I acknowledge, it has been with some Impatience, that I have long long expected, these Gentlemen, that say they are so qualified to carry on this Trade, should produce the Rules and Proviso's, by which they will preserve this Trade—— And to this Hour Nothing of it has shown it self—— And really till they do, my wild Man above is in the right; the Vote is in the Company's Favour.

Should a Man be condemn'd to be shot to Death with white Powder, and all his Accusers and Pursuers could not find out the Powder, would not the Man count himself acquitted? The Thing is plain, the Committee has gratify'd the Complainers, they have all they ask'd—Now it lies upon them to tell the Parliament, what Proviso's they can offer, that SHALL PRESERVE the Trade by maintaining, &c.

Now, Gentlemen, where are these Proviso's? For it does not lie upon the *House* to find them, you are the Proposers of this regulated Company——Help Factors and Agents, help *African* Companies, Renegadoes, the Betrayers of Conversation, the *Ziba's* of the Trade, that make their Fortunes out of their Masters, and then accuse them! Help you high and mighty Trade Mountebanks, that having long studied the nice Skill of receiving good Salaries for knowing little and doing nothing, talk as much to as little Purpose in this Case, as you do in every Case; help now or never, for if you do not now, you never can. Now pray, Gentlemen, shall we examine a little your Pretensions; for tho' you are asham'd to bring them into the House, we have some Notions of them.

It shall be a regulated Company, like the *Turkey* Company—*Say they*, wherein every Man is free to trade or not to trade as he pleases. *Very good*, the Money to be rais'd *per Cent.* upon the Value exported must be mighty certain then, when the Value exported is uncertain. Then a Committee shall be nominated, who shall act in the Name of the Company, and every Trader shall pay 5 *l.* at his being made Free—That's but once, by the Way; and if a Thousand come in, tho' a Hundred are not likely, yet it makes but a Trifle; then 5 *per Cent.* or say, 10 *per Cent.* shall be paid for the Support of the Forts and Castles—And there's our Fund; a mighty Certainty indeed, had the Government no better, Annuities would not be so dear as they have been.

Now I'll suppose two Cases, that I am very true, not the D..l and the separate Traders, tho' they were to study a-part, *for I hope they do not consult together*, can ever conspire.

1. Were the Export 50000 *l. per Annum*, which I am very sure they will not engage to export, tho' the Company offer to be bound to export 100000 *l.* this at 10 *per Cent.* is but 5000 *l.* which will no more support the Forts and Castles in the Terms of the Act, *viz. such as be needful*, than it would rebuild St. *Paul*'.
2. Suppose, I *A. B.* am a Freeman of the Company, *C. D. E. F. G. H.* and *I.* are the like; we find some Discouragement, or have receiv'd Losses, and whereas we traded last Year for 25000 of the above 50000 *l.* we let it fall for this Year, and as it were sit still, employ our Ships some other way, and wait better Times. *Now*, the Trade being thus lessen'd one half, *but the Expence remaining the same for Forts and Castles*, the Committee find the 10 *per Cent.* raises but half the Money wanted, and to make it up, they must raise 20 *per Cent.* upon that Part of the Trade which remains——This discourages more, and all being at Liberty to trade, *or let it alone*, half the Remainder give out the next Year, and so it is reduc'd to 12500 *l. per An.* (*as it seems the last Year here, when all the Interlopers traded but for* 19000 *l.*) Well, the Committee may have the same Charge upon them, and those few left must double again, and pay 40 *l. p. Cent.*—And so on, till no Body will trade.

And where then are your Provisions to maintain, &c. the Charge? Pray, Gentlemen, do not banter the Parliament of *Britain* any more, but let these Provisions be seen, by which you will be tyed and oblig'd to secure the Trade?

Till

Till you do this, the Vote is really against you, and my first Man's Opinion is right—You are shooting the Company with white Powder!—You shall have a Company to your Hearts Content, do but shew us the Proviso's you can submit to, that will preserve the Trade; and till you do that, you do nothing.

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## *Of the Insolvents, and a Continuation of* Pitkin's *Case*, &c.

IN speaking of the Cruelty of Creditors, I am now upon *its Tendency*, particularly how unjust in it self, and how disadvantagious to the Creditor; I make no question, I could easily make it appear, that the late Act of Bankrupts Surrender was and is now the greatest Security to the Creditor in the World, and saving a few at first, is now very little Advantage to the Debtor—And yet what Opposition did the Creditors, Tradesmen, make at the passing that Law, as if it had been the greatest Mischief that ever was to befall Trade, and as if it was a Law to enable Debtors to run away with their Creditors Estates?—What Out-cries did our Shop-keepers make, with what Clamour did they weary the *House of Commons*, how did they cuffle the *House of Lords*, and alledge at their Bar, that this would be opening the Door to all Manner of Frauds, setting the Debtor upon the Top of the Creditor, and giving Encouragement to Bankrupts, not to defraud only, but insult their Creditors?

Here the Gentlemen will allow themselves mistaken, and have they not been equally so in the cruel Prosecutions made up on Debtors all along?—They have been mistaken in the Justice of it, and mistaken in the Advantage, I instanc'd in *Pitkin's* Case, and the making void an Agreement sign'd, executed, and perform'd between Parties on both Sides.

The Cruelty of this Affair I refer to Sentences and Prosecutions; the Effect of general Clamour in a Case, in which I must be allow'd to say, I think the Measures wrong, the Consequences fruitless, and the Design barbarous——The Injustice of it I lay at the Door of them, *because it is not fit for me to joyn others*, who after they had discharged a Man upon a solemn Agreement, and made a firm, solid, and, *had they been fair*, indissolvible Peace, pursued a farther Claim upon the Person by an Advantage, which I hope, no no honest Men will follow——— And if it be true, as I am credibly inform'd it is, and some say, there is Witness to prove it, that a certain Tradesman in this City, *whose Name in Pity to him I conceal*, when he was ask'd, where the Justice of this Prosecution was, should answer, *They did not mind Justice, the Act design'd them Money, and Money they must have, right or wrong*; I say, if this were true, let those People answer for it, whose Consciences are of that Latitude.

But to come to the Case, Mr. *Pitkin* brings in Mr. *Brerewood*, and others, and they meeting together, propose a great many scrupulous Cases, and no Agreement is made; at last a third Person interposes, and as a Mediator brings them to a Truce. This Truce is made, eight Shillings and six Pence is profer'd to make an amicable End, and this End is made, finished, executed, all Sides express themselves pleas'd, and the Persons are discharg'd. I shall not enquire into what Prospects the Creditors had of getting more by it, for to me that's no Argument for the Honesty at all; but they break over all these Agreements, keep the condition'd Payment, and are now murthering the Man for the rest. This is the Case I am upon, and from which I infer, that no Debtor will for the future venture any Agreement with Creditors, or run the Risque of being discharg'd in such a precarious Manner, when an Act of Parliament shall unravel it all; and after all, let them sit down, and tell us the Cost, and then give the World but an Account of what they have got by all this Cruelty, and that I shall talk of by it self.

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